United Nations

Daily Highlights

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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

+ Security Council, deeply concerned about "persistent tension in Angola", expresses support for talks in Abidjan and hopes for successful outcome; Council President announces formal meeting at Foreign Ministers level on Friday, 21 May, on "aspects of peace-keeping operations".

+ Security Council conveys its indignation and grief at tragic death of Lieutenant Arturo Muñoz Castellanos, Spanish UNPROFOR peace-keeper serving in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

+ United Nations/OAS International Civilian Mission in Haiti and Haitian Armed Forces agree in principle on "mechanism" for investigation of grave human rights violations.

+ Secretary-General expresses full confidence in Special Representative for Angola Margaret Anstee; will soon decide on her request to be released from position; urges Angolan parties to cooperate in Côte d'Ivoire peace process.

+ Canada proposes creation of "international ad hoc war crimes tribunal", in addition to permanent body, to ensure swift prosecution in former Yugoslavia; international expert group meets in New York to study Secretary-General's recent proposal for statute for tribunal.

+ Information Committee discusses arrangements for coverage of United Nations; correspondents suggest designation of Security Council spokesman.

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The Security Council, deeply concerned about "the persistent tension in Angola", has expressed its support for the talks in Abidjan and the hope that those negotiations would produce successful result in the nearest future.

In a statement read out by Council President Yuliy Vorontsov (Russian Federation) this evening, the Council also expressed its belief that it should remain seized with the situation in Angola and take further appropriate steps to support the peace process.

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In a separate development, Mr. Vorontsov informed correspondents that a meeting of the Council at the level of Foreign Ministers would be convened on Friday, 21 May. The meeting was being called to study all the aspects of the peace-keeping operations, including their financing.

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The President of the Security Council, Yuliy Vorontsov, this evening conveyed the Council's indignation and grief at the tragic death of Lieutenant Arturo Muñoz Castellanos, a member of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) Spanish battalion serving in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Vorontsov also expressed the Council's heartfelt condolences to the family of the soldier and the Spanish Government, whose troops had thus suffered their first casualty in the cause of United Nations peace-keeping.

The death had brought to 41 the number of fatalities suffered by UNPROFOR in the last twelve months -- an unacceptable number, the statement said.

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The International Civilian Mission in Haiti and the Haitian Armed Forces have agreed on the principle of establishing "a mechanism" for the investigation of human rights violations, according to a press release issued today by the Mission, a joint undertaking by the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS). The mechanism would allow the Mission to submit urgent and grave cases of violations to the Armed Forces, which would announce the results of its own investigations.

The agreement was reached when a Mission delegation led by Executive Director Colin Granderson met with the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Raoul Cedras, and the entire High Command, the press release said. The delegation expressed concern about reported human rights violations, disappearances of political opponents and deaths in detention, and protested against the intimidation of international observers.

The Mission would support Haitian initiatives to provide legal assistance for the victims of human rights violations, and welcomed a statement by General Cedras favouring measures to give the most deprived people access to justice, according to the press release.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed full confidence in Margaret J. Anstee, his Special Representative for Angola, and will soon decide on her request to be released from her responsibilities, a United Nations spokesman said today.

In the meantime, Miss Anstee's deep knowledge of the Angolan situation and her competence were valuable assets in the crucial phase of the ongoing peace process in Côte d'Ivoire, according to the spokesman. The

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Secretary-General expressed the hope that the parties would reach an agreement without delay, and urged them to cooperate fully with his Special Representative.

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Canada has proposed the creation of an "international ad hoc war crimes tribunal", in addition to a permanent international criminal court, to ensure that those guilty of atrocities in the conflict in former Yugoslavia will swiftly be brought to justice.

According to a letter to the Secretary-General from the Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada, Barbara McDougal, dated 11 May, such an ad hoc mechanism was discussed at a recent international meeting of experts in Vancouver. To head the tribunal as Cheif Prosecutor, she offered the name of C.A. Amerasinghe, Senior General Council for the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Section. She also offered the service of a team of lawyers and investigators from the Canadian Department of Justice and Department of National Defence in order to ensure the "smooth operation" of the tribunal.

Mr. McDougal asked that $300,000 recently contributed by Canada to the Trust Fund for the United Nations Commission of Experts on war crimes in the former Yugoslavia be used for an examination of evidence of systematic sexual assaults and mass killings.

Meanwhile, a group of international law experts met yesterday at the United States Mission to the United Nations in New York to examine Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's recent proposal for a statute for an international war crimes tribunal to prosecute atrocities in former Yugoslavia. The United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, said the discussions with the experts showed that international law was "up to the challenge" and that, while there might be ways to improve the Secretary-General's draft, experts supported the prompt and orderly creation of the statute for the tribunal.

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The President of the United Nations Correspondents Association (UNCA) has called for the designation of a spokesman for the Security Council since that body dominated the work of journalists covering Headquarters. He also called for more access to interviews with United Nations officials, especially the Secretary-General. Speaking at the Information committee's meeting this morning, UNCA President, Behzat Baris, said there had not been adequate discussions between the Department of Public Information (DPI) and UNCA prior to last year's renovation of the press area.

A representative of the International Organization of Journalists, stating that in the past two years more journalists had been persecuted than ever before, called for the organization of a world forum to discuss the problem and develop methods to defend journalists from attacks.

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